

Before The
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of:)	MB Docket No. 12-108
)	
Accessibility of User Interfaces, and Video)	
Programming Guides and Menus)	
)	
)	

COMMENTS

OF

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES,
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS OFFICERS AND ADVISORS &
U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS



The National Association of Counties, National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors and the U.S. Conference of Mayors submit this comment to the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) May 30, 2013 Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in the above-referenced proceedings. The National Association of Counties (NACo) is a national organization that represents America's 3,069 counties. The National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA) is a national trade association that promotes local government interests in communications, and serves as a resource for local officials as they seek to promote communications infrastructure development. The United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) is the official non-partisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more, where each of these 1,302 cities are represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor.

It is our belief that section 205 of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 (hereinafter "CVAA") provides the FCC with the legal authority to require cable distributors to carry program description information in programming guides for local public, education and government (PEG) channels. The plain language of section 205 of the CVAA authorizes the FCC to require audibility of on-screen menus so that the visually impaired can have meaningful access to any array of programming¹. However, in order for audible on-screen menus to have functional utility to the visually impaired, the on-screen menu itself should be populated with information that is meaningful and helpful in program selection.

In order to provide accessibility, the cable operator should be required to carry the program title as provided by the local government authority that produces local PEG programs. Currently, many local PEG programs are displayed on the on-screen menu as simply "local government access." An audible version of this description would not provide the visually impaired viewer sufficient information to make a meaningful program selection. The description "local government access" does not provide the visually impaired viewer any information as to the nature of the program and thus discourages civic engagement.

¹ 47 USC § 303(bb) (stating in pertinent part: [the Commission shall] require – if achievable, that the on-screen text menus and guides provided by navigation devices (as such term is defined in section 76.1200 of title 47, Code of Federal Regulations) for the display or selection of multichannel video programming are audibly accessible in real-time upon request by individuals who are blind or visually impaired, except that the Commission may not specify the technical standards, protocols, procedures, and other technical requirements for meeting this requirement.

The FCC could and should require that cable distributors display program information as provided by the local PEG station on navigational devices so that when audible on-screen menus become a reality, the visually impaired can more readily access and participate in civic activities.

We applaud the Commission for undertaking this important issue and we urge the Commission to consider the potential consequences to civic participation among the visually impaired that may result from inadequate display of program description.